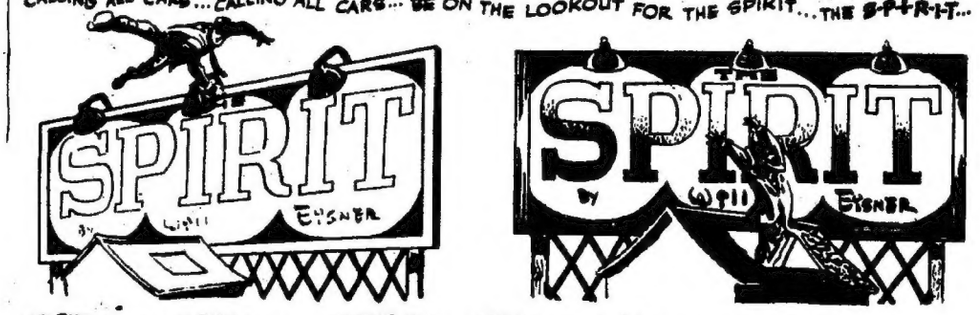
THE VAULT OF MINDLESS FELLOWSHIP

NO. 2 DECEMBER 1972 50¢

SPIRIT FANS TAKE NOTE!



HEIGHT SIX FEET, ONE INCH... WEIGHS 200... WEARING BLUE SUIT... BLUE GLOVES... MASK... WANTED FOR AIDING IN ESCAPE OF TWO CRIMINALS... HE MAY BE DANGEROUS !!
WELCOME TO THE UNDERWORLD, SPIRIT ! HOW DOES IT FEEL, BEING HUNTED, INSTEAD OF THE HUNTER ?

Too long ago, an artist named Will Eisner created a comic strip called the SPIRIT which ran in many newspapers and had quite a following among the readers.

Started on June 2, 1940, this strip is considered to be the finest work that Eisner has accomplished in the many years he has contributed to the growing comic industry, and Eisner has been called the greatest single innovator, writing and drawing thousands of original pages since the 30's.

Those of you who are familiar with his incredible work, will be joyously surprised to learn that his favorite creation, the SPIRIT, is being reprinted.

The SPIRIT comic Sunday section was originally printed in a comic book form along with other features done by other artists. This little booklet appeared in your Sunday newspaper instead of the large cumbersome sheet of comics. This was a new and novel way to present some of the finest comics to appear for a long time.

As we mentioned, the SPIRIT is being reprinted in its original size and shape format. The weekly episodes of the SPIRIT will be released, 10-8 page stories a month, 10 individual booklets packed in a nifty plastic bag in chronological order from the first episode in 1940 to the last in 1952, in sharp offset black and white on Will Eisner's press and under his strict scrutiny.

What used to be a useless hunt for crumbling, high priced, and non existent original sections, is now gone forever. The sections are reprinted on good non-yellowing offset paper to keep your collection a treasured keepsake for the future.

Mr. Will Eisner himself will personally supervise the entire project, which will be printed at his New York office from (except for the first few months where none exist) the original art and stats belonging to Mr. Eisner. Finally you will know which ones were done by Mr. Eisner, as only those sections will be printed.

THIS IS YOUR CHANCE TO GET A COMPLETE COLLECTION OF THE WILL EISNER SPIRIT STORIES. THESE WILL BE AVAILABLE FROM YOUR FAVORITE COMIC, AND UNDERGROUND COMIC DEALER AT THE LOW PRICE OF 4 DOLLARS PER MONTHLY SET OF 10 SPIRIT STORIES, THAT MAKES IT ONLY 40¢ PER 8 PAGE BOOK. AT THAT PRICE YOU CAN AFFORD TO BUY TWO SETS, ONE TO READ, AND ONE TO PUT AWAY. YOU CAN SUBSCRIBE DIRECT AND SAVE MONEY, POSTAGE, AND WORRY OF MISSING A SET. EITHER WAY YOU CAN'T LOSE ON THIS TREMENDOUS DEAL. DON'T PUT IT OFF, THESE WILL BE SOLD OUT FAST.

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THE VAULT OF MINDLESS FELLOWSHIP NO. 2

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THE MINDLESS FELLOWSHIP WHIZ KIDS

BRUCE AYRES--The ambivalently authoritarian financial wizard behind the runaway success of The Vault can scarcely be considered sane. He is currently planning a pilgrimage to Alex Toth's boyhood home.

STEVEN D. GRANT--Anarchist, master of Zen Pinball, and guiding literary light of The Vault, he has authored two as-yet-unpublished books: Pictures at an Execution and Ill Prepared for the Onslaught.

BILL CROSS is a man without a past. He does not remember anything about his early years. He does not know anything about his future. He lives alone with a cat and three others. This is his first known published work.

CHRIS MORRIS--A frustrated musician who loves antiquated jive talk and strong tobacco, he is perhaps unfortunately best known to Madisonians for his critiques of comics, film, books and music, which have appeared with alarming regularity in the Daily Cardinal and the Madison-Milwaukee Bugle-American.

HELEN LARK is relatively conclusive proof of the chromosomal damage incurred in Small-Town, U.S.A. Although brain motor function is minimal, she managed to type and coordinate most of this issue.

BILL CROOK--Oblivious to comics until discovering R. Crumb, this soft-spoken anthropomorph now spends most of his waking hours in conversation with Bismo the rubber duck. He hopes to get into undergrounds someday...if he can get freaky enough. Good luck, kiddo!

MIKE ALROY--Madison expatriate now living in California where he is finishing his novel, Master of the Obvious. Previously an artist at Nino's West, he is a dishwasher of some renown, or vice-versa.

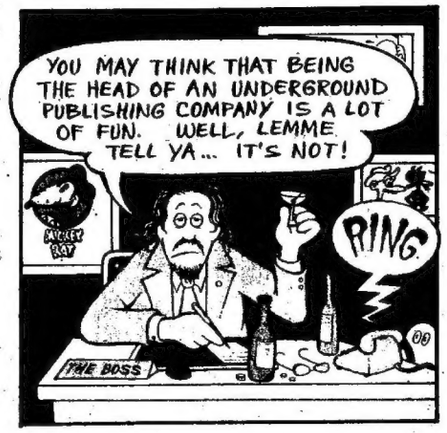
RICHARD KRAUSS entered the Vault in the early morning hours of August, 1967, as a result of his essay entitled, "The Origin and Varied Uses of the Gum Drop". Gaining momentum early in life, he soon aspired to participation. Since then, his luck has run out.

and special thanks to London-based commercial artist Mardy Ayres for this issue's cover.

You too can be a Mindless Fellowship Whiz kid, and get girls, big muscles, and win lots of swell prizes. All you have to do is contribute to the next issue, and with no drugs or heavy mental exercise, in just a few minutes a day, you can be wowing them and writing for Playboy. You have nothing to lose but your mind. In order to take advantage of this unique offer, send your contributions immediately to Box 1185, Madison, Wisconsin, 53701, or drop them off at the Buffalo Shoppe. This may be your big chance!

MADISON COMICS FANZINE

You wanted to see me, Boss?
Too bad... yer gonna miss the Brewers–White Sox game...
I MEAN... AT LEAST WE COULD SAY WE TRIED. EVEN THOUGH TWO CREATURES COULDN'T DO MUCH... A LIFETIME OF HARD WORK MIGHT...
THE REGULAR, JOE.
Arf.
He killed the DREAD SPUD!
GASP!
ICK
Let's split!
DENIS KITCHEN
This is POOCH. He's my doggie... and my lover.
How about that, Kids?
whish!
My place or yours?
I seem to have run into some trouble.
REX!
Y'KNOW, COZ... THE WORLD IS DETERIORATING FAST. THE POISON IS SPREADING ALL AROUND.
SNIP SNIP
$50,000
INTERVIEW:
DENIS KITCHEN
PLINK
PLINK
Plink
Thanks... I needed that.
Out the side door...
YEP... NEXT WEEK, COZ... WE'RE GONNA SAVE THE WORLD.
S-S-SHLOOK
GLUG
We've been looking for you a long time, M.M.
Crime don't pay, punk
(Blush...)
(GULP!) Gotta think fast... ESCAPE! That's it!
At last I reached my final destination. My blood curdled as I entered the dank chambers and was confronted by THE DREAD SPUD.... but I assumed an air of haughty self-confidence.
The master will see you shortly.
Flake off, small fry! I wanna see the big man...
NOW!


YOU MAY THINK THAT BEING THE HEAD OF AN UNDERGROUND PUBLISHING COMPANY IS A LOT OF FUN. WELL, LEMME TELL YA... IT'S NOT!
RING
THE BOSS

An
Interview
With
Denis Kitchen

Conducted by Bill Cross on Monday November 13, at the offices of Krupp Comic Works, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

BC: We're talking to Denis Kitchen, the leader of the vast underground publishing cartel known as Krupp Comic Works in Milwaukee. Denis, how did you get started as an underground cartoonist? That's always a good question to begin with.

Kitchen: How did I get started as an underground cartoonist? Well, I started by being a cartoonist, and I kind of got into it accidentally, because I was doing work for the University and I decided to put together a book, and I was totally unaware of what was going on in California that summer...about that time they put out the first Zap. I never saw Zap until about a year later. I just did a book of my own (Mom's Homemade Comix), and somehow, one of the underground publishers at that time, in fact, the only one at that time, The Print Mint, got ahold of a copy, and asked if they could reprint it, and that's how I found out that they had this whole thing going, with Zap and Bijou and all the others. You know, Milwaukee, as it is with many things, was way behind the times.

BC: How much trouble did you have getting the first book out?

Kitchen: No trouble at all. because I found this printer who gave me credit terms. Otherwise, it never would have gotten out.

BC: And from there you graduated to running your own comic book publishing company?

Kitchen: Right. That happened by accident too. I didn't intend to be a publisher by any means. I had gotten ripped off by The Print Mint, and since there was no other publisher around, although there was Rip-Off Press, they were financially unsound, so I decided to start a company here.

BC: So how well has it worked out?

Kitchen: Beyond my wildest imagination. Most of my time is now taken up with my duties as a publisher, rather than that of a cartoonist.

BC: Do you find more satisfaction cartooning, or running this publishing company?

Kitchen: They're both satisfying. Although I enjoy the publishing, it's nice to draw.

BC: What started as a sort of a sideline to what was happening in the sixties has now almost become a mainstay as the underground comix. There were a lot of wild speculations about how long they could last, and what they could do. Do you have any idea what direction they're going to go? I mean, there was that great burst of energy when they first came out, and then there were the horror books, like Skull, and now it seems to be stagnating, and they seem to be looking for a direction. Do you have any idea what this direction is going to be and what it's going to do?

Kitchen: It's really hard to say. I suspect that what will happen is that the underground comix are going to become more traditional and the straight comics are going to become more underground, and there's going to be some point in between where there isn't going to be much difference. I think it all comes down to economics. As long as the undergrounds sell as they're doing right now, they'll stay alive, though no one will really prosper. As for the straight comics, as long as their circulation continues to decline, they're going to try desperate things, and they've already made attempts to make the books more hip and more relevant. They've already gone so far as to use the underground spelling "comix" for several of the Marvel comics. Just a short while ago, Stan Lee called and asked me to edit a book for him that would be semi-underground in the sense that it would be, I think the terms he used were irreverent and iconoclastic, though not explicit.

BC: Do you see yourself as the new Harvey Kurtsman?

Kitchen: As a matter of fact, he (Stan Lee) made that comparison, although I think it was an attempt to flatter me. At any rate, I turned it down, primarily because it's a lot more fun to call all the shots on a small scale than to be just another editor in a big operation.

BC: A few minutes ago, you said that the straight comics rely on a large mass circulation to survive. If you have a higher cover price and you don't have the same circulation as the straight comics, how do you survive?

Kitchen: The cover price, of course, is 50¢, and the costs are still kind of high, but if we can sell, say, 20,000 of a title, then it's still worth our while, and in most cases, that's pretty easy now. There's a lot of trash coming out, I hope by mostly other publishers. I've tried to put out a good quality series, but there have been times when things have slipped through that haven't been that great, and though you try to put out quality books, sometimes the bad books sell well and vice-versa. As long as you can keep the cover price at 50¢ and sell a sufficient number of copies, will, that's it.

BC: What about the experiments in color now being conducted in underground comix? When they first came out they were all in black and white, and now they're doing color, such as Richard Corben's Fantagor. Are you planning to do anything in color?

Kitchen: Yes. As a matter of fact, we were slow to explore color, because it's an expensive process, and I'm not convinced that it's worth the trouble, because it takes more time with color separation and all, and the higher cover price. Our first color book is going to be Bijou #9, it's going to be Tales Calculated to Drive You Bijou. It's going to be a parody on several levels. First of all, we're going to have underground cartoonists doing parodies of each other. Jay Lynch is going to do "Those Furshlugginer Hairy Geek Brothers", Skip Williamson is going to parody Crumb, I'm doing "Hungry Irving Biscuits", and we're going to be doing it in the old Mad style, as you could probably tell by the name Hungry Irving. It's always Irving or Melvin, or something. We're going to try to get the look and typography of the early Mads. In addition to parodying Clyne when I do "Hungry Irving Biscuits", I also have to parody Elder, or Davis, or Wood. So, I hope it comes off. It's kind of a big undertaking.

BC: You used to have some contact with Harvey Kurtzman, who used to edit the early issues of Mad magazine. Does he have any plans to do anything in the underground?

Kitchen: I'm glad you asked that question. He's doing the cover for Snarf #5.

BC: Will he be doing anything else?

Kitchen: I hope so. I'm trying to get him to do things, but it's kind of hard to outbid Hugh Hefner.

BC: Do you know what kind of contract he has worked out with Hefner?

Kitchen: Well, I know he has to do six Annie Fannys a year, and he gets a pretty substantial salary for doing that. He's free to do anything, but he doesn't have much time, and that's why he isn't doing any underground stuff. He knows what's going on, he thinks it's a very exciting field, and he wishes he were younger and less tied down, because he finds himself now caught in a middle class trap, and he's got to maintain a standard of living that he can't risk losing, and if he suddenly jumped into the underground, I have no doubt he would lose it.

BC: What is Krupp doing outside of the conventional underground comix? I know you just put out a 78 record by Robert Crumb. Are there any other projects in addition to the record?

Kitchen: Well, we intend to do a series of seventy-eights. You may see the poster on the wall there advertising giant comic covers. That's our next project. We're doing a magazine called Inside Dirt, which is a parody of the old men's magazines, with cheap pulp pages, and articles which have to do with the subculture.

BC: I understand you're planning to publish more-or-less legitimate artists. I understand that you have the rights to The Spirit by Will Eisner.

Kitchen: Well, no one has defined underground yet, and I don't feel that I should limit the books to just young cartoonists. I'd like to use the facilities we have to just get some good books out, and leave it up to the readers and critics to define them as underground or not. I'm very happy to have the rights to Eisner's stuff. I think it's classic material, and most people in my generation aren't familiar with it, except for a few comic book freaks like yourselves, and so I found out that Eisner is really excited, for example, about the new comics and about doing new stories, be-

cause he's been out of it for twenty years.

BC: Are you planning to do anything along those lines outside of The Spirit?

Kitchen: Sure. I have lots of plans...whether or not they materialize, I can't say.

BC: You used to be connected with the Bugle American. What happened with that? Are you still connected with that paper?

Kitchen: Not really. I was one of the founders of the paper, and for about six months, three days a week, I worked for the Bugle without any kind of pay. At the same time, Krupp was forming, and it wasn't paying either, and I was just about literally starving for a while. One of them had to go, and I decided to stick with Krupp. So I gave up my shares in the Bugle, and I occasionally do a guest thing for them, because they're friends, but there's no way I can devote time to both of them.

BC: What happened to those weekly strips you did for it?

Kitchen: Well, what happened with those was, the five cartoonists who were doing them, we decided to each do a strip each week, partly just for our own benefit. We wanted to help out the Bugle, and we wanted to do something similar to the daily papers, but with a new approach, and in the back of our minds, we thought we could maybe do some kind of syndication. We tried it with the university papers, and it was a kind of discipline we needed badly, because we were basically lazy, and in many cases our styles hadn't really developed, and we were forced to draw a strip a week at a time when many weeks would go by, and we couldn't draw a thing.

BC: So you stopped drawing them when you thought you'd gone as far as you could go?

Kitchen: As with most things, it stemmed from economics. the Bugle at that time had still not reached the break-even point, and it was barely surviving, mostly due to not paying contributors. Since the syndicate wasn't paying off, where were we going to go from here? We were spending at least a day a week doing our daily strips, and once we finished the strips, we'd go down and help lay out the Bugle, and do illustrations and covers, and we found that that kind of investment was no longer tolerable, so we just had to go our own ways. Emotionally, we would have liked to keep doing it. We decided to spend the time on comic book pages, which at least pay a nominal rate.

BC: We've been talking quite a bit about the financial side of this. How is Krupp set up financially? Out of the 50¢ cover charge, who gets what?

Kitchen: We have the highest royalty setup for any publishers today, which is 12%. The next highest rate is 10%. So out of a 50¢ book, 6¢ goes to the artist. Another 7-8¢ goes to the printer, and most of the rest goes to the distributor, who buys in volume, and gets between 40-60% off. Between the artist, printer, and distributor, that leaves about 6¢ per copy for us.

BC: What kind of distribution does the underground have? Is it very well organized among all the companies to get the books out on the stands?

Kitchen: We have deals with the west coast publishers, primarily with Last Gasp and Rip-Off Press, primarily so we can get our books into the Bay area, and they can get theirs here, but we primarily rely on our own system, which is independent distributors all over the country, and there are strong distributors and weak distributors, and it's hard to gauge just how together we are.

BC: Suppose someone wanted to do an underground comic, how would they go about doing it? Would they just bring you art samples?

Kitchen: Yes. It's a lot harder now, because our standards are getting higher and higher, but basically that's how it works. There are a lot of people who walk in, who send their stuff through the mail that just aren't anywhere near publishable. Occasionally, someone will come up with something, and if it meets certain criteria, it'll get published. There's no real hassles. I don't sit on things for months or anything.

BC: So you're also more or less the creative director of Krupp?

Kitchen: Yeah. I try to keep the editing minimal. Mostly the editing I do is in multi artist books. In Snarf, for instance, we have six to eight artists per book, and I coordinate the lengths of the pages and the general subject matter, but generally I try to keep it more esthetic than story wise. I pretty much

...continued on page 30

THE EC CONVENTION

THE EC CONVENTION REPORT

"Ya' got any EC's?" is the most frequently heard refrain at any fan gathering or convention, and rightly so. EC comic books are generally considered to be the finest group of comics ever published.

At the peak of its creativity, the Entertaining Comics line published a total of only ten titles: Tales from the Crypt, Vault of Horror, Haunt of Fear, Frontline Combat, Two-Fisted Tales, Crime Suspense Stories, Shock Suspense Stories, Weird Fantasy, Weird Science, and Mad. These titles comprised what the EC people dubbed "the New Trend". Although they published a few "pre-trend" titles, prior to these ten, and a few "post-trend" titles, like Valor, Impact, and Extra, after the 1955 comics code came into affect, the nucleus of the EC comics group and its claim to fame were these ten primary titles.

Al Feldstein, Harvey Kurtzman, Johnny Craig and publisher Bill Gaines wrote most of the stories with the bulk of the writing falling to Feldstein and Gaines. Their adaptions of Ray Bradbury were met with stoned approval from discerning fans and Bradbury himself (who was occasionally featured in the letter columns), but the general public preferred its stuff seasoned with a lot more spice and a little less melancholia.

The standard EC horror plot line was the conventional retribution-from-the-grave angle often quite imaginatively refurbished and, over the course of EC's five years, extensively reworked.

The crime, suspense, and science fiction stories were dominated by O'Henryesque plot twists that, in the case of the SF, eloquently hammered home some very cosmic truths about our abuse of technology, ignorance, and inhumanity.

A strong no-punches-pulled anti-war sentiment was the prevailing theme of the Kurtzman edited war books, heightened to the n^{th} degree by Kurtzman's extremely sophisticated panel breakdowns.

The group of artists that EC assembled to illustrate these stories was truly legendary: Wally Wood, John Severin, Jack Davis, Al Williamson, Johnny Craig, Reed Crandall, Bernie Krigstein, Joe Orlando, Will Elder, Graham Ingels, Jack Kamen, George Evans and at one time or another Joe Kubert, Frank Frazetta, Alex Toth, Russ Heath, Sid Check, Angelo Torres, Gene Colan, Roy Krenkel and Dave Berg. Both Feldstein and Kurtzman wrote and illustrated initially but gave up the drawing board after story demands became overbearing.

Not only reknowned for their excellence in story and art, EC's were also the genesis of comics fandom as we know it today. They were the first comic co. to institute a regular letters column in their magazines, encouraging comment and establishing an intimacy with their readers that eventually gave birth to the official EC Fan-Addict Club with its membership buttons, newsletters and assorted paraphenalia. This club predated by some ten years the Merry Marvel Marching Society of the '60's.

So enthused by EC comics, some readers not satiated by a letters column, a fan club and a newsletter, began their own small magazines (or "fanzines" as the generic term now applies) devoted to discussion and examination of these sacred mags.

Some of these early fanzines, like Hoohah and Potrzebie, though crudely done by todays super-slick standards, projected a great deal of energy and charm. Much later came Squa Tront and Spa Fon, the foremost EC fanzines of today, dwarfing both in scope and achievement their parent 'zines of yesteryear.

With the introduction of the comics code in 1954, due in large measure to the climate of McCarthyism, the rise of the juvenile gangs, and an overflooded, gore saturated comic book market, EC, along with less discriminating publishers of crime and horror type mags folded within a year's time.

But the memory lingered... for some the reality also in the form of Mad magazine, the only surviving EC publication. Mad, although a financial bonanza for Gaines and Co., lost much of its creative impetus with the abdication of Harvey Kurtzman as its editor in a squabble with Gaines over editorial control and direction. Even the most fanatical EC fan barely gives Mad more than a cursory glance these days...and Gaines weeps all the way to the bank, his world-wide legion of Mad fans, most never having heard of EC "comic" books, joining him in a chorus of the what-me-worry boogie.

Official and belated recognition for these fine books occurred over the weekend of May 26-29, 1972, when the Hotel McAlpin, N.Y.C., played

host to the first annual EC Fan Addict Convention. It was a superb con...an abundance of comics, "luminaries", pro panels, films, awards and EC addicts!

Awards were given out in the horror and SF categories only, with Graham Ingels copping both best individual horror story artist (for "Horror We...How's Bayou?") and all around horror artist. "Blind Alleys" by Feldstein garnered the best horror story prize. In the SF category, Al Williamson edged out Wally Wood for best illustrated story ("Food for Thought"), though Wood, amidst thunderous applause, received the best all around artist award. "Judgement Day", again penned by Al Feldstein, was deemed the best SF story, and that was it. Although every fan had their personal favorites, these were definitely the general favorites of the assembled multitude.

Everyone was on hand to personally receive their awards except "Ghastly" Graham Ingels who, according to Gaines, wouldn't under any circumstances either attend the con or acknowledge any award for the work he did at EC, considering it to be worthless crap devoid of any conceivable merit! In an apparently unusual phone conversation with Gaines, prior to the con, Ingels not only renounced his EC stuff but displayed a secretiveness about his present whereabouts and occupation that bordered on paranoia. Gaines said he would adopt custody of the award until Graham changes his mind.

Most of the panel discussions, a little heavily weighted with assorted nostalgic reminisces, were met with equal measures of warm appreciation and somnambulent apathy...the majority of EC fans attending being already familiar with the anecdotes and personality insights offered. The best panel by any standards was the combination pro/underground gathering which really got it going on the subjects of censorship, finances, and the old aboveground vs. underground debate. The most surprising bit of information being the number of pro artists contemplating underground work -- including Wally Wood, Al Williamson and Neal Adams.

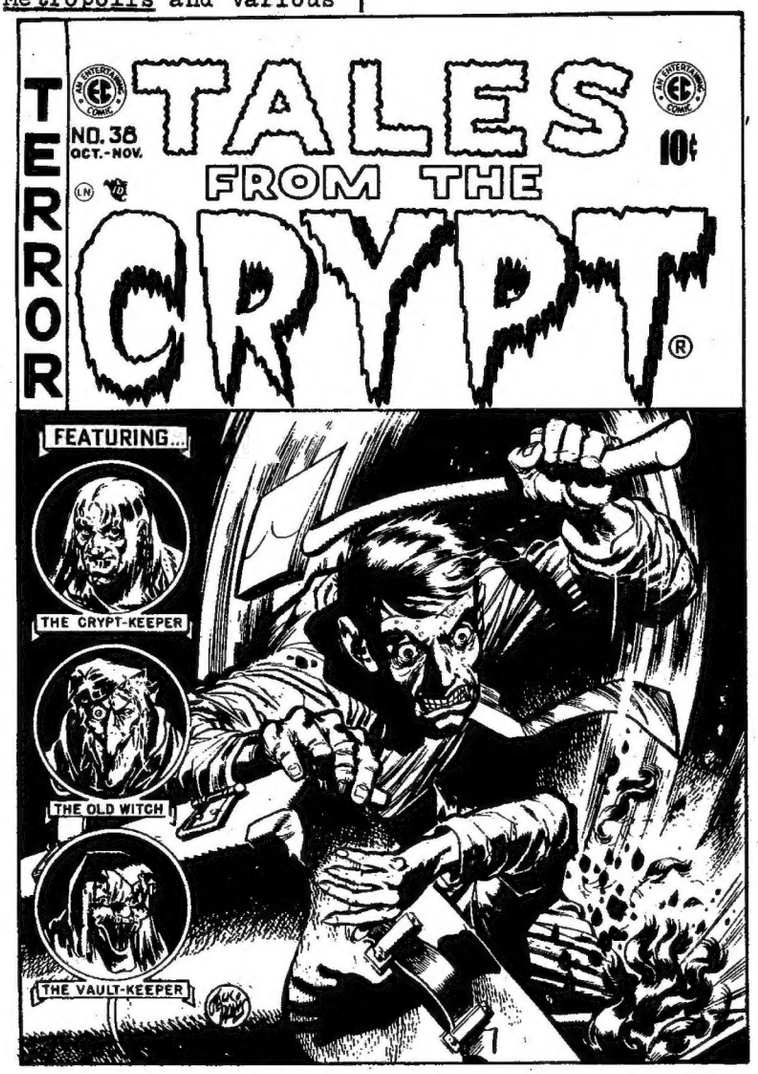
The Amicus Tales from the Crypt film adaption played twice daily in the film room. Also shown were Horror of Dracula (the first Chris Lee starrer from Hammer), Fritz Lang's Metropolis and various other feature length and short subjects in the SF/horror vein. Projection and sound for all shows was especially good.

There was an EC slide show composed of covers and interior art which, although sparsely attended, was a very friendly affair. An original EC art exhibit was also on continual display eliciting the usual oohs and ahhs.

Gaines, Williamson, Wood, Evans, Kurtzman, Orlando and Feldstein were on hand for most of the con's four days, fielding questions or sketching for the fans and making valiant attempts to retain some token modesty in the face of all this adulation.

The con ended Monday evening and the next day we flew

...continued on page 26



THE RISE AND FALL OF UNDERGROUND COMIX?

The Rise And Fall of Underground Comix!

A Survey by Chris Morris

Some genius somewhere once pointed out that almost any new artistic development created by a hip elite is doomed to an ultimate cooptation by bourgeois culture. Sadly, this statement is at its zenith of applicability with relation to underground comix. The five years since the birth of this unique and exciting experiment in graphics has seen the absolute enfeeblement of the art form and wanton thievery from the comix on the part of American mass media and advertising.

Where did underground comix come from, and how did they fall?

If credit is due to one man for spawning the comix boom, it should not go, as might be first expected, to Robert Crumb, but rather to Harvey Kurtzman, the brains behind the comic book format Mad, and the editor of the adventurous magazine, Help!

Although Kurtzman brought old talent from Mad like Bill Elder, Jack Davis, and Wally Wood with him to Help!, he also featured the work of an unusual group of cartoonists and renegade commercial artists. Among them were Gilbert Shelton (perhaps the most widely featured of the young artists), Robert Crumb, Skip Williamson, and Jayzey Lunch. Shelton was irregularily spotlighted through his Wonder Warthog strip, while the others contributed one-panel cartoons and other ephemera. (Crumb did do at least one "sketchbook" of Moscow, and appeared in the photo-cum-balloon "fumettis".)

It was Crumb, of course, who a few years later pioneered the field with Zap 1, followed shortly by #0 of the same title.

Crumb's first books set the style for fledgling ug cartoonists of the future. He coupled a complete liberation of the repressed cartoonists' psyche with the refuse of American culture: "funny animal" comics, early 1950's advertisements, jive talk, Milt Gross, pornographic eight-pagers, instructional handbooks, and Mad magazine. This style had the doper's mind in mind (chronologically the comix flowered with the whole West Coast-acid-ballroom-Summer of Love scene.); the book featured the American/Tibetian pragmatist/sage Mr. Natural and was loaded with tales filled with visual and lyrical hooks for the stoned mind. Sex, dope, and violence were all out front, in absolute defiance of the Puritanical Comics Code. It was all outrageously funny, trippy, and gross, but there was a sociopolitical bias that gave the reader some food for thought. (Straight comics ultimately had to respond with their late-sixties "relevance" kick.)

If one issue of all the undergrounds may be viewed as definitive, it would have to be Zap 2. There are three typically wild Crumb stories, but three new artists were admitted to the Zap crowd: S. Clay Wilson, Rick Griffin, and Victor Moscoso. These four talents combined just about define the underground artists' total viewpoint. Crumb has his funny bunnies, capering clowns, smart ass seers, and alienated bourgeoisie; Wilson had his demented pirates, blood-thirsty thugs, and ruthless psychos; and Griffin and Moscoso have their non-linear, metamorphic fantasies. The ug cartoonist/artist did little more than liberate himself for his audience's amusement and provocation. All a kind of visual rock-and-roll.

Zap was a regular title, and its success led a number of other cartoonists to start other continuing books. Bijou was similar in composition and feeling to Zap, if somewhat tamer. It featured Help! artists Skip Williamson and Jayzey Lynch. Williamson created his own zoot-suiter Snappy Sammy Smoot, a square lost in a hip world; this feature did a marvelous job of spoofing both cultures, and the artwork was archetypically underground, with a kaliedascope of bug-eyed, rubbery, spastic characters. Lynch's Nard N' Pat was the ultimate in smart animal-dumb human strips, and the art was deliciously old-fashioned.

Other books would start up and either continue for a few issues or fold after one or two. Skull still specializes in ECesque horror; Crumb's Motorcity Comix lightly parodied the revolutionary scene and big industry; Young Lust is True Confessions made explicit; and Air Pirates and Dan O'Neill's Comics and Stories showed a

nostalgia for the Disney and "funny animal" books of the forties and fifties.

The growing subculture, the increased distribution of the comix themselves, and additional public attention to comics and pop culture in general assured that comix would not remain underground for long. Reprints of old issues, bigger press runs, and corporate distribution for smaller, one-shot numbers brought more and more comix to the public. An underground "style" had been developed, complete with catch phrases and standards of style. Many unoriginal bush-league amatuers sprang up for a piece of good old underground pie.

Comix became big business. What had once been the property of a small group of West Coast freaks was almost merchandised into extinction. Mr. Natural became the Snoopy of the counterculture; t-shirts were offered with the likeness of yer favorite ug comix superstar emblazoned thereon. People no longer walked down the street, they trucked. 7-Up launched an ad campaign designed by, some say, Crumb himself.

Crumb's old work for American Greeting Cards has been reissued, and is selling briskly. And this writer found one radio station in Florida calling itself "Keep On Truckin'" Radio, its billboards replete with Crumb swipes. What developed is a hip bourgeoisie (which is what it was in the first place, probably), sitting at home playing its Dealer McDope Game, reading the latest issue of Thrive On Jive Funnies. Crumb knows what's going on; his latest book, XYZ Comics, contains a one-page spoof of the merchandising of his work.

Just as Cheech and Chong jumped up with their lame doper jokes in the wake of the Firesign Theatre's brilliant mixture of technological wizardry and wordplay, a smug and timid breed of ug cartoonists are attempting to wear the ten-gallon hat worn by such violent and mad artists as Wilson and Crumb. One of the wildest flowers of psychedelic bohemianism of the late sixties has wilted in the face of the onslaught of a monstrous WallStreet invasion and the simultaneous deflation of a self-destructive counter culture. Instead of the truly startling, frightening, and beautiful creations of yesterday, comix now give us nothing but lukewarm tales for old heads. Pity.

Comix: A Personal Checklist

Considering the massive output of the underground comix mills over the last five years, there are surprisingly few titles that are worthy of a rereading. Nonetheless, the percentage of readable titles is still much higher than that of the straight comic book presses. I present here an arguable catalogue of "essential" underground comix. The only criteria used here are those of durable artistry and originality. Many later titles, as I have pointed out, are strictly derivative or merely vulgar.

Zap #0-4 (R. Crumb, S. Clay Wilson, Rick Griffin, Victor Moscoso, Gilbert Shelton, Robert Williams). The pioneer efforts.

Mr. Natural #1-2 (Crumb). Comix's greatest character.

Despair (Crumb). Crumb's most brilliant effort is the feature story, "It's Really Too Bad."

The Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers #1-2 (Shelton). Hysterical tales starring the counterculture's answer to the Marx Brothers. Next to Mr. Natch, the most enduring underground creations.

Bent (Wilson). Gore, sex, and dementia -- a frothing masterpiece.

Dan O'Neill's Comics and Stories #1-3 (O'Neill). Disney Studios litigation has unfortunately scuttled this poetic and elliptical book, starring the Odds Bodkins.

Air Pirates Funnies #1-2 (O'Neill, Bobby London, Gary Halgren, Ted Richards). More magnificent Disney swipes and the neo-Herriman of Dirty Duck.

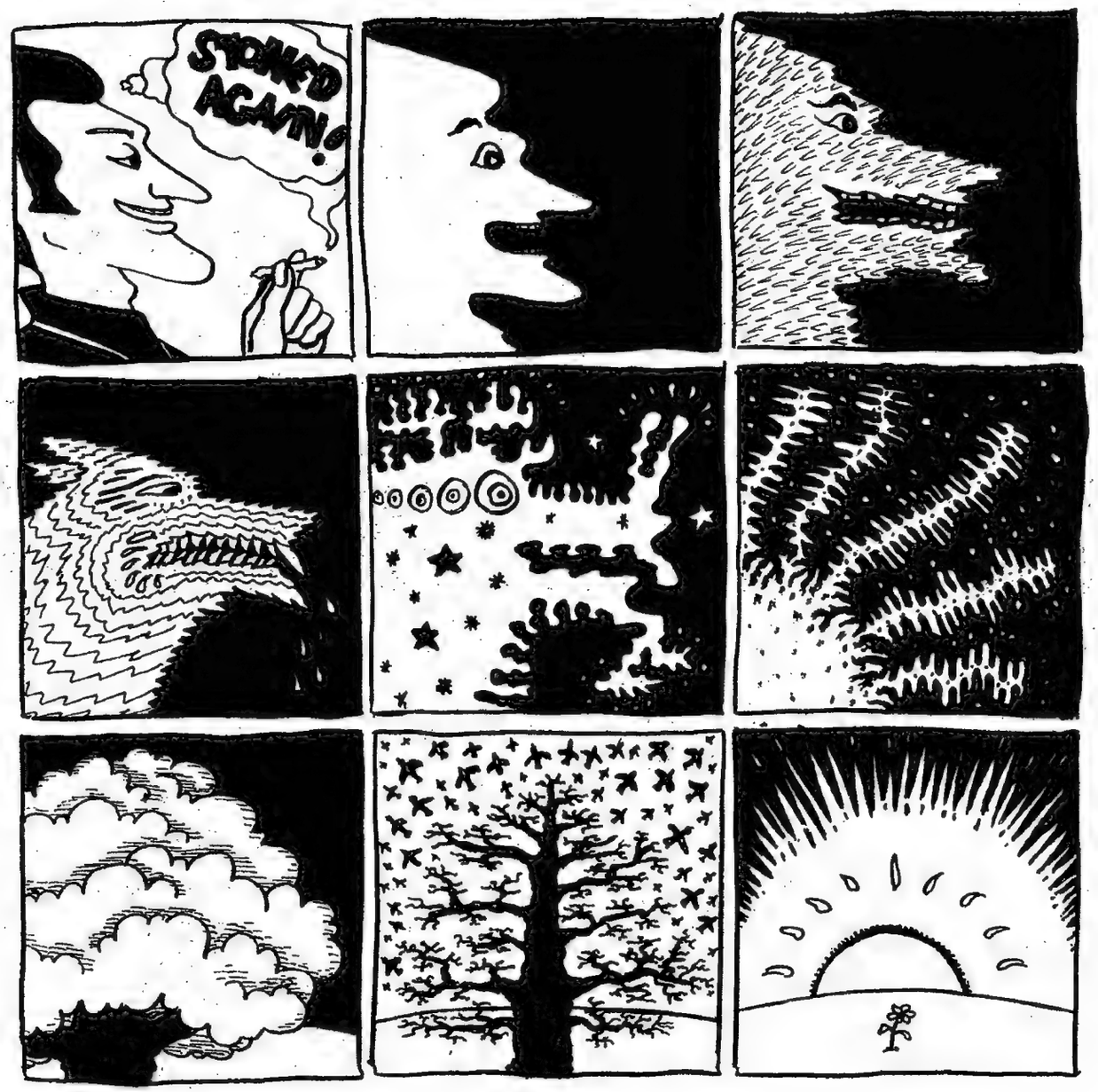
Dirty Duck (London). More of Dirty Duck, in his pre-National Lampoon Herrimanesque period. London now draws more heavily from Segar (Popeye) for the Duck, who gets more and more Groucho with every strip.

Bijou #1-6 (Jayzey Lynch, Skip Williamson, Justin Green, Crumb). Midwest madness, with Nard 'n' Pat particularily funny (in a benign way). Unfortunately uneven books, but check them out.

Skull #1-4 (Richard Corben, Jaxon, Dave Sheridan, et al). "Gore" Corben's story in #2 was the most superb nouveau EC horror of all. Issue #4 is a Lovecraft adaptation, uneven but interesting.

...continued on page 30

COMIC RIP-OFFS
When WE LAST LEFT OUR STAR-SPANGLED HERO, THE INTREPID CAPTAIN HAD FALLEN INTO THE SLIMEY CLUTCHES OF HIS ARCH ENEMY, THE SKULL! WHAT FIENDISH DEATH TRAP AWAITS?
ALL RIGHT, SKULL! WHAT'S IT GOING TO BE THIS TIME? A HORDE OF SCREEMING ARMY ANTS ALL OVER MY MOLASSES-COVERED BOD? LIGHTED BAMBOO SPLINTS UNDER MY FINGERNAILS? THE CHINESE WATER TORTURE? OR WORSE... (GOD FORBID!) A... VASECTOMY?
GUESS AGAIN, CAP! THIS TIME I'VE DEVISED THE ULTIMATE DEATH TRAP! THERE IS NO ESCAPE!
OH, COME ON, RED! I'VE BEEN ESCAPING FROM YOUR TRAPS FOR 30 YEARS! NOW, COME ON, WHAT'S REALLY GONNA HAPPEN? ...
...DISENTEGRATION) BY A PSEUDO-SUB-ISONTONIC MOLECULAR DISEMOLER? HM?
NOPE!
I...I KNOW! DEADLY NERVE GAS! RIGHT? HUH?
PRAID NOT.
OR A LASER WHICH SPLITS ME (AND THE TABLE, TOO) IN HALF! I'VE GOT IT! THE OL' SLIDING WALL WITH THE SPIKES ROUTINE
NO!
WHA... WHAT IS IT, SKULL, YOU BASTARD? THE SUSPENSE IS KILLING ME!! WHAT IS YOUR INESCAPABLE DEATH TRAP!?
A GERMAN LUGER, YOU FOOL!
GOODBYE CAPTAIN
BAM!
NEXT MONTH: RED SKULL FUNNIES !!!
MORRIS & CROSS


STONED AGAIN!

The Spirit Section
THE SPIRIT
ACTION Mystery ADVENTURE
WARD 2
23
24
25
26
CLUMP
CLUMP
CLUMP
CLUMP
CLUMP
CLUMP
CLUMP
CASE RECORD
No 42478
patient: the Spirit
BY: WILL EISNER
address:
entered: 11/1
complaint: Bullet wounds
description of case: Bullets lodged in both legs. Rapidly spreading bone infection — left tibia, ant.
RECOMMENDED TREATMENT
Surgery... amputation of left leg
hospitalization. Authority must
ks in advance
File no.
CLUMP
CLUMP
CLUMP

Will Eisner AND THE SPIRIT

by Steven Grant
and Bruce Ayres

Five years after the introduction of original material comic books, and two years after the arrival of Superman, another milestone in comics history occurred. On June 2, 1940, several newspapers around the country began carrying a sixteen page comic book called The Spirit Section, featuring three adventure characters: The Spirit, Lady Luck, and Mr. Mystic. The Spirit, of course, was the main attraction, and his adventures continued every Sunday up to September 28, 1952, making him one of the longest lasting, best loved heroes of the Golden Age.

The Spirit really began in 1917, with the birth of William Eisner to a Seventh Avenue manufacturer and his wife. In a little under two decades, Eisner was to become one of the most influential men in the comic book business, and certainly one of the greatest influences on the creators and the direction of comics in the 20th century.

Eisner says that he decided to be an artist when he was seven years old. In his youth, he watched lots of movies and studied art and literature, his greatest influences being the films of Man Ray, and the woodcuts of Lynn Ward. His interest in art and theatre led him to study stage designing at DeWitt Clinton High School in New York City. Eventually he turned his studies toward art and cartooning. In literature, he tended to prefer the short story, particularly those of Ben Hecht and O'Henry.

His first job was in the advertising department of the New York American. Shortly thereafter, at 19, Will seems to have worked for Henle Publishers of New Jersey, who ran a line of newspaper strip reprint comics. The August, 1936, issue of Wow, What A Magazine (#2) featured his first comic book work. He did the cover of the magazine, and two inside stories, one a Doc Savage imitation -- Captain Scott Dalton -- and the other a pirate strip -- The Flame.. The only real import of these strips was the honor of purportedly being the first original inside material ever done for comics.

Simultaneously, Eisner did work for other publishers, notably Famous Funnies.

Throughout the next few years, Eisner worked for a variety of companies. In an effort to get more work, he convinced the publishers that he had a large staff working for him (a large staff at the time connoting professionalism and speed) by adopting several nom de plumes, the most famous being Willis Rensie. Around this time, he created his first "name" series: a pirate strip called Hawks of the Sea, later merely called The Hawk. It first appeared in Famous Funnies, the Wags, and finally moved to Jumbo Comics, where it spent the remainder of its existence.

Then, in the late 30's, Eisner formed a partnership with Jerry Iger, ex-editor of Wow, to produce original comic book material for needy publishers. The shop sported, at one time or another, such artists as Bob Kane (creator of Batman), Bernard Baily (who drew Hourman and The Spectre), and Mort Meskin (creator of Johnny Quick and Mark Merlin), and reputedly, Jack Kirby. Among the shop's first customers was the newly formed Fiction House, who bought one of Eisner's best known creations, Sheena, Queen of the Jungle. In those late depression days, the shop was a sound fiscal venture. Eisner would create and design characters, and various persons would be directed to draw, ink, and letter. The net profit per page was $1.50, and Eisner became respectably

An example of Eisner's splash pages. It defines and foreshadows the events in the story that follows. Most interesting is the clipboard; Eisner always tried to put The Spirit masthead somewhere useful on the first page, or to mix it into buildings, newspapers, etc.

wealthy in a very short time.

Eventually, Eisner split with Iger, who went to work for Fiction House. Eisner then joined with Everett M. ("Busy") Arnold, who was embarking on what was to shortly become The Quality Comics Group. With him, Eisner took various shop artists, including Lou Fine, Nick Cardy, Bob Powell, and Chuch Cuidera. Eisner was extremely prolific at Quality, creating such characters as Uncle Sam, Black X-Spy, Blackhawk, and having a hand in the creation of most of the others, including Plastic Man.

It was in the early part of 1940 that Eisner created what was to become his greatest character: the Spirit. Eisner concieved the idea of a color comic book insert for Sunday newspapers, and proceeded to launch The Spirit Section, which was originally syndicated by the Des Moines Register and Tribune Syndicate. In an effort to convince the syndicate that he could produce on schedule, the first section was hurriedly thrown together over one hectic, midnight-oil-burning weekend.

The initial strip, dated June 2, 1940, recounted the apparent demise of private detective Denny Colt at the hands of the insidious Dr. Cobra. Although interred in Wildwood Cemetery, Colt had actually been placed in a state of suspended animation by the mad doctor, thereby setting the stage for his eventual "resurrection" as the Spirit. After donning a mask to protect his identity, he nabbed Cobra and established a working relationship with police Commissioner Dolan that allowed him to continue solving crimes as the Spirit.

The next episode introduced The Spirit's hideout in the now deserted Wildwood Cemetery (or under, to be precise... See, you turn the "o" in Colt on Denny Colt's tombstone, and this secret door opens, and you go into the Spirit's headquarters. Neat, huh? It appeared with as little explanation, and as much plausibility, as the Batcave.).

Two characters who were to become an integral part of the strip were also introduced at this time: Ellen Dolan, daughter of the police Commissioner and the Spirit's perennial love interest; and the little black boy Ebony White, who due to story changes was inexplicably transformed from a taxi driver of 22 to a boy of about 12 in the space of a few weeks. Although patterned after the standard "nigger" stereotypes of that day, Eisner managed to imbue Ebony with a great deal of warmth and dignity.

Chronologically, The Spirit is divided into four sections: 1) June 1940-June 1942; 2) July 1942-1945; 3)1946-July 1952; and 4) July 1952-September 1952.

During the first period, although Eisner was personally handling The Spirit, he did not seem to be sure what direction he wanted to take the strip in. Originally set up as a mystery-adventure series along the lines of Red Barry and Secret Agent X-9, it was sloppily drawn, missing occasional masks, and paying little attention to background detail. The Spirit was initially a run of the mill adventurer, not only fighting crime in Central City, but globe-trotting through exotic European locales. However, Eisner soon began to see the potential of the strip, and influenced by his periodic movie-going it took on a more cinematic stance. He also introduced other supporting characters, such as Silk Satin, a British secret agent who was embroiled in a never-ending war with Ellen Dolan for the Spirit's affections. Late in this period, The Spirit also appeared in daily newspaper strips. (These have been collected in two volumes, and are available from Joan Aprill, 5272 W. Liberty Rd., Ann Arbor, Michigan, 48103.)

The two strips which backed up The Spirit at this time were Lady Luck and Mr. Mystic. Lady Luck, alias socialite Brenda Banks, dressed in a green outfit with a shamrock emblem and beat hell out of spies and criminals. Done under the house name of "Ford Davis", the strip was done first by Lou Fine, followed by Chuck Mazootian, Nick Cardy, and finally Klaus Nordling, who discarded the haous name, and signed his own to the strips. Mr. Mystic was a young man schooled in the black arts under the tutelage of Tibetan lamas, who provided him with a magic amulet and marked his forehead with the word of power, thus enabling him to perform wondrous feats of magic. The series was done for the most part by S.R. (Bob) Powell, and then by Fred Guardineer.

The first period of The Spirit ended when Eisner was drafted into the army in June, 1942. Then Lou Fine took

I'VE GOT A SPELL AGAIN!
...PARRISH IS COMING AFTER ME... GOT TO KEEP AWAY FROM HIM... THIS SPELL MAY NOT LAST.. ...GOT TO KEEP MOVING...AWAY FROM HIM...
YOU HAVEN'T A CHANCE, STET.!
I WAS IN THE FIRST WAR, MR. STET...A CAPTAIN... PRETTY GOOD SHOT, TOO...
I CAN SAY YOU CAME BACK... ADMITTED STEALING THE MONEY... THREATENED ME... EH? HOW DOES THAT SOUND?
SELF-DEFENSE.! ...I SHOT YOU TO PREVENT YOU FROM ROBBING ME!
MY SIGHT IS COMING BACK...EVERYTHING IS BLURRED, BUT NOW I CAN SEE A BIT... RUN!...MY ONLY CHANCE IS TO RUN... THERE'S THE DOOR...
HE'S AN OLD MAN... I CAN OUTDISTANCE HIM...
WHERE ARE YOU RUNNING, MR. STET? YOU CAN'T SEE... LOOK OUT FOR THAT LAMP...
VERY GOOD, MR. STET! YOU'LL MAKE IT LOOK AS IF WE STRUGGLED... ADD TO MY STORY TO THE POLICE! HEH HEH HEH
...HIS VOICE IS FARTHER AWAY NOW... MAYBE I'M OUT OF HIS SIGHT... I CAN BARELY SEE OUTLINES... GOT TO HIDE BEHIND SOMETHING... I MUST HIDE!
WHERE DID YOU GO, MR. STET...? INTO ONE OF THE OFFICES? WAIT FOR ME... I'LL FIND YOU!
IT'S A LONG NIGHT...WE HAVE QUITE SOME TIME TO PLAY OUR GAME...
HEH HEH..AS WE USED TO SAY WHEN PLAYING HIDE AND SEEK IN OUR YOUTH... "AM..I...HOT... OR..AM..I..COLD ??
I'VE BLACKED OUT AGAIN! I'M NOW COMPLETELY BLIND!
HE'S...GOT..ME.. NOW...

As this example shows, Eisner mingled special effects and suspenseful narrative. Adding to the suspense are the beads of sweat on Stet's face. The lettering in the last panel is utilized to show panic and resignation.

over the strip, and with the help of Alex Kotzky (now doing the comic strip Apartment 3-G) attempted to imitate Eisner's style. Although Eisner and Fine were both excellent artists, they were worlds apart stylistically, and Fine's Spirit paled beside Eisner's. After Kotzky left the strip, Fine gave up his Eisner imitation and switched to his natural style, a transition which almost killed The Spirit.

At this time, Arnold was expanding the Quality Comics Group, and among his new magazines was the title Police Comics, which starred Jack Cole's Plastic Man. Arnold also owned the copyright to The Spirit Sections, and and began reprinting them in Police with #11. Eisner reprints lasted through #42, and then only the Lou Fine issues were reprinted. The Spirit got his own magazine in 1944, which lasted about two dozen issues. Lady Luck was reprinted in Smash Comics, side by side with Jack Cole's Spirit parody, Midnight. Lady Luck eventually took over the lead spot in the magazine, and the name was changed in 1949 to Lady Luck Comics. Mr. Mystic was dropped on May 14, 1944, when Fred Guardineer went into the Army. It was replaced by a humor strip called Intellectual Amos, which in turn was shortly replaced by the moronic Flatfoot Burns.

Eisner returned from the Army in late 1945, but did not take over The Spirit again until 1946, which began the third and greatest period for The Spirit.

Will Eisner had not been idle during his stay in the Army. He had convinced enough people of the educational possibilities of comic books, thereby securing several military contracts, including his present contract for the production of Preventative Maintainance Magazine, toward which he directs most of his energies these days. He also perfected his comparison of movies and the comic form. He had learned to accurately apply film technique to comic books. His pacing, angles, and effects became overtly cinematic, and Will Eisner soon found himself to be the leading practitioner of comics noir.

In his efforts to give The Spirit a new life, Eisner hired a young artist named Jerry Grandenetti to ink his pencils, and various writers, including the young Jules Feiffer, to help him with the scripting. Creative control of the strip remained entirely with Eisner, who had finally settled on the direction which the strip would take. Discarding the role of adventurer, The Spirit evolved into a being of the city, through which the denizens of that city revealed their stories. It was the little man, the otherwise forgotten man who was now the real star of The Spirit. There was Quadrant J. Stet, an accountant who was going blind and couldn't afford an eye-saving operation; there was Cranfranz Qwayle, who hated his wife; Freddie, the slum kid who robbed and murdered in a desperate attempt to get out of the ghetto; and Gebhart Schnobble, who could fly but nobody noticed. Eisner invested the strip with the milieu that he knew best, the city and its many bizarre inhabitants. The series hit its stride in 1947, and stayed there until 1951, when Eisner, busy with other things, let it slip. During this period, Eisner wrote most of the plots, did most of the writing, most of the pencils, and some of the inks. Grandenetti did some of the pencils and most of the inks.

The final period of The Spirit encompassed the last few weeks of the strip in 1952. It was called Denny Colt in Outer Space, in which a scientist takes several exconvicts and a reluctant Spirit on a trip into outer space. Although done by the capable team of Jules Feiffer and Wally Wood, this series marked the final deterioration of The Spirit strip, exemplified by its removal of the Spirit from his realistic cosmopolitan milieu and the burdening of the character with science fantasy trappings.

The last new stories of The Spirit were done in the January 9, 1966, edition of the New York Sunday Herald Tribune, and two stories done for the illfated Harvey books of 1966. Some have theorized that Wally Wood did these last two, but it is more likely that Eisner layed them out, and one of his assistants, quite possibly Mike Ploog (who does Ghost Rider, Werewolf by Night, and Frankenstein for Marvel) did the finished pencils and inks. It is quite doubtful whether the subject will ever be settled.

What made The Spirit so special? Eisner was a storyteller. He wrote in pictures, and never said anything in words that he could put into his artwork. A character never said that he was happy

or angry, nor was it mentioned in some caption. The expression was captured on the character's face, or became obvious from their actions. Eisner was a master of emotional caricature.

Humor ran wild in The Spirit. Eisner attacked and lampooned anything that he felt like hitting at the moment. He ridiculed novels, movies, fads, and news stories of the day. He once devastatingly crucified the critics of comic books in a hilarious portrayal of a music teacher who finds himself trapped in a Kafkaesque web of terror after confiscating a student's comic book. Every year, The Spirit had two special episodes: the Halloween Spirit, starring the old witch Hazel Macbeth; and the Christman Spirit, in which the spirit of goodness held the spotlight. Once, he gave it to Santa Claus, who lost his memory on Christmas Eve, and spent Christmas Day in Central City jail.

The characters made The Spirit memorable. The characters did more than exist for a story, they convinced. They were never entirely consistent, and were often surprising. Crooks would do good deeds, milquetoasts would perform heroic acts, even the Spirit himself periodically let criminals go free.

The Spirit was a pretty accurate representative of humanity, not only in his feelings, but in his actions. He was constantly getting hurt, and, unlike his superpowered brethren, the Spirit would suffer from his wounds for several weeks at a time. He was shot, beaten, mauled, and stabbed, but somehow he persisted.

The Spirit's motivation was simple. In an interview, Eisner said:

> "The Spirit had all of the middle-class motivations, which is that 'I've got to have something to do; this is my thing, this is my schtick', and he went out and did it. Of course, the big thing, the big problem each week was to figure out an acceptable reason why he should get involved in this in the first place."[1]

He did what he did because that's what he did best, not that he did it all that well. There were times when he stumbled through his adventures, nothing more than a victim of circumstances. He was involved in some of the most bizarre situations in the history of comics. He would take vacations in mountain resorts that rented themselves out for homicides; he would get trapped with murderers on desert islands. One of his best adventures involved a blizzard which trapped him in the sewers of Central City, where he discovered the hideout of the world's most dangerous criminals. His problem was how to stay alive long enough for the sanitation department to clear the streets so that he could get out and notify the police.

The closest that the Spirit ever came to being taken out of the fight was in 1949, when he was shot in the legs while pursuing some criminals. Instead of letting the wounds heal, he took off after the villains, and eventually captured them. Two weeks later came an extremely dramatic episode wherein Silk Satin and Ellen Dolan scoured Central City trying to find a doctor who could perform the operation that would make the amputation of the Spirit's left leg unnecessary. They found him, of course, but the Spirit lay on the operating table for the better part of the episode. He wore crutches for several weeks afterward while recuperating.

Silk Satin and Ellen Dolan were only two of the women that the Spirit knew. There were dozens of others, like Thorne Strand, Monica Veto, Autumn Mews, Lilly Lotus, Plaster of Paris, Destiny Blake, Sally of the Islands, Lorelei, and Flaxen Weaver. Eisner's best villains were all villainesses. Possibly the finest of them all was the lovely, cunning P'Gell, who schemed her way in and out of the strip, and spent a good deal of time escaping police, prison, and the Spirit. He eventually obtained for a reformed P'Gell, a job as headmistress of a girl's school, no doubt turning out villainesses for the next generation.

The only regular male villains in the strip were The Octopus, who seemed to be the kingpin of all the crime in the world (although you never saw anything of him but his gloved hands), and Mr. Carrion, who had a pet vulture affectionately named Julia. Other supporting characters, besides Dolan, were a bumbling rookie cop named Officer Klink, Ward Healy, who held a position in Central City politics similar to that which Mayor Daley holds in Chicago, Sammy, a little kid who Jules Feiffer

wrote in to replace Ebony sometime in 1949, and P.S., a football-helmeted little kid with an everpresent peppermint stick plastered in his mouth, who appeared in his own strip at the bottom of each Spirit page.

One of the reasons that The Spirit was such a success-strip was because Eisner had a format that allowed him to avoid problems that plagued comics made for newsstands. Due to the newspaper nature of the strip, Eisner was not at the mercy of the distributors, who have some very odd policies indeed. There was no being pushed to the back of the newsstand, or not being displayed at all. The Spirit was always available.

Eisner's greatest asset was his total artistic control of The Spirit. As he himself says:

> "I felt that I was the epitome of the media, and that I was helping in the development of a media in itself. Comics before that were pretty much pictures in sequence, and I was trying to create a thing, an artform. And I was conscious of that, and I used to talk about it. I remember when, especially in the days that Feiffer was working for me, we used to have long discussions about it as an artform. 'How can we improve this?', 'How can we make this better?', 'How can we do better things?'.
>
> It was almost a continuing laboratory, and I was very lucky, because there wasn't anyone who could stop me from doing what I wanted. I owned my own feature and I had the respect of my distributor, and there was nobody to stop me. I only had to stay within those bounds of propriety that would enable it to get by the editor of a newspaper."[2]

Will the Spirit ever return? Yes! Although it is highly unlikely that new adventures will ever be produced, the Spirit's old adventures will be available in a reprint series from Dave Gibson's Spirit Publications in California (see accompanying ad), and in a new series of underground comix that will be available from Krupp Comic Works in Milwaukee sometime next year. Will Eisner has also done an original cover featuring the Spirit for Snarf #3, which should be available now. For those who have never seen the beauty of The Spirit, there is still a chance.

* * *

Corrections and Additional Information on Will Eisner and The Spirit:

1. Eisner did indeed work with Jack Kirby (in an editorial capacity) while both of them were working for the Editors Press Service in the late 30's. The service packaged American material for foreign distributions. Most noticeable is the similarity between Eisner's Hawks of the Sea and Kirby's Blue Beetle and Sandman strips.
2. Mr. Mystic was virtually identical to an Eisner creation of several years prior called Yarko the Great.
3. If we have given the impression that every Spirit section was a masterpiece, we did not mean to. The Spirit had its share of bad episodes, especially those with which Eisner himself was not connected. However, the strip probably had the highest percentage of great stories of any series in the history of comics.
4. Latest evidence seems to indicate that the last Spirit section appeared on October 5, 1952.
5. Harvey Kurtzman and Bill Elder may have worked in conjunction with Eisner when he farmed The Spirit out to the Charles William Harvey Studio in late 1951.
6. The last change on The Spirit really began with August 5, 1951, when Eisner virtually left the strip. Jerry Grandenetti did most thereafter, and the rest were farmed out to various studios. The Wally Wood art on the last few strips is among the best work he has ever produced, and was much better than the artwork immediately preceding it.

Footnotes

[1] Witzend Magazine #6 Wonderful Publishing Company, 1968. Interview with Will Eisner by John Benson, pp. 6-11.

[2] Ibid.

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MEANWHILE, LET US GROPE OUR WAY THROUGH THE FOG TO PIER 16, THE OLDEST OF THE ABANDONED WHARVES IN CENTRAL CITY'S LONG-UNUSED NORTH BAY...
A THUD... A THROTTLING OF ENGINES...AND A STRANGE MAN STEPS ASHORE...
CAW
MR. CARRION...
SSH... JULIA..IF YOU AROUSE THE POLICE, OUR LONG JOURNEY WILL HAVE BEEN IN VAIN...
MR. CARRION.. AT LAST!
ALLAH HAS SMILED ON OUR UNDERTAKING... YOU HAVE SUCCEEDED, MR. CARRION?
I AM HERE, GENTLEMEN, WITH OUR FORTUNE!
..IT WAS A SIMPLE MATTER.. AND DON'T LET THE LEGEND FOOL YOU! IT SAYS THAT WHEN THE GOLD IS NOT IN THE PRESENCE OF A LEPRECHAUN, IT CHANGES TO DROSS...HA HA...AT THE CURRENT RATE OF EXCHANGE OF $35 AN OUNCE, WE'LL NET SOME $30,000!! WORTH AN OCEAN VOYAGE, EH?
'TIS GOLD INDEED..
WAIT... WHO IS THE GIRL?
BLIMY, DON'T YOU KNOW 'ER?? COO..SHE SAID YOU'D MADE A DEAL WITH 'ER!
SO, MY DEAR WISP ...YOU ARE NOT MR. CARRION'S FRIEND!
..BY MY BEARD I'LL...
THE SPIRIT!
UH-UH LADY...I'LL TAKE THAT!
AFTER HIM, FOOLS... GET HIM!
'ERE, NOW.. WOT'S GOIN' ON? 'OO GAVE YOU THE RIGHT TO ORDER US ABOUT?
BY ALLAH... IT IS NOW EVERY MAN FOR HIMSELF!
WHO GETS THE SPIRIT... GETS THE GOLD!
AND AS THE CLOCKS TOLL 11:30, A DEADLY GAME OF HUNTER AND HUNTED BEGINS.. CLOAKED BY THE FOG AND LIMITED TO THE MURKY CONFINES OF THE EVENING MIST...
WELL...I'VE GOT JUST 30 MINUTES TO GET THIS GOLD TO HEADQUARTERS ...IF I'M NOT JUMPED...

A typical Spirit page. It combines Eisner's angle shots, characterization, humor, mood, and action. The villain is Mr. Carrion, and the girl is Wisp O'Smoke, a leprechaun.

REVIEWS:

THE EC HORROR LIBRARY
Ron Barlow and Bhob Stewart, Editors.
Foreword by Larry Stark.
Introduction by Bhob Stewart.
Nostalgia Press, Franklin Square, New York, 1971.
$19.95.

I sit here staring at this over-sized, luridly colored book...wondering what to say about it. There is a huge myth running rampant among comic fans that the EC books of the fifties represented the pinnacle of achievement for the graphic story medium. They are good, maybe even great, but the greatest they ain't. Now that I've offended most of you fan addicts out there, we can get down to cases.

What we have here is a nifty little anthology of 23 stories culled from issues of the EC horror, suspense, and sci-fi books of the fifties, including one previously unpublished sci-fi story — along with cover reproductions, artists' biographies (as they were printed in the EC books), and ads for such things as the EC Fan Addict Club and the first issue of Mad. The book contains work by some of the legendary masters of comic art: Davis, Wood, Ingels, Crandall, Craig, Krigstein, Williamson, and Frazetta. The work presented bears out some artists' reputations while it fails for others. I especially find Frazetta's work lacking. Sure, the man has created fantastic cover paintings, but this comic story pales artistically next to the work of other EC artists, and that of many contemporary artists (such as Wrightson, Steranko, or Adams). The trouble is that most comic fans hear the name of an artist and immediately begin to drool over it in some quasi-Pavlovian response that blocks out any objective analysis of artistic merit.

On the whole, however, the artwork ranges from competent to excellent. Jack Davis' work ("'Tain't the Meat... It's the Humanity" and the infamous "Foul Play") teeters brilliantly between the grisly reality and graveyard satire that is needed for the story to be presented to its best effect. Ingels' reputation as the best of the EC horror staff is borne out here, as his bizarro style of distorted faces and bodies is the perfect complement for the perverted yet strangely sentimental story lines. Johnny Craig is another artist whose work does not justify his reputation. His plots are excellent, but his artwork just barely moves above mediocre. Ah, but then there's always Bernie Krigstein. His innovative approach to the horror story was unique for the EC line, and stands out as fresh as ever today. His two stories, "Master Race" and "Pipe Dream", particularly the former, are among the best stories in the entire volume. But enough about the art.

Perhaps the best comment on the subject was made by Bill Schelly in Sense of Wonder: "The importance of the EC comics lies in their excellence, it is true -- but particularly their excellence amid tons of mediocre, tasteless, sensational comics." The stories still carry a lot of their old snap, although you do get tired of seeing one more corpse rise from the grave to seek the expected vengeance. On the whole, the suspense stories were better written than the horror tales because they relied less on grisly pictures for their impact. The finest story in the book is perhaps "A Special Kind of Justice". I found it outstanding because the typical EC justice (namely ghoul over bad guy) doesn't occur. The bad guy gets away while an innocent man is killed for his crime. Secondly, because of the message the story carries about police brutality and mob action.

I guess the only real complaints I have with the book are its coloring and the exclusion of the Harvey Kurtzman material. The coloring process was the same one that is used to color regular comics. On the higher quality paper, however, the colors appear garrish and extremely unrealistic. And by limiting their scope to the horror and sci-fi books, they've ignored the real, lasting achievement of EC: Mad...not to mention the many fine anti-war stories Kurtzman wrote for the EC war books. Perhaps the subsequent volumes of EC material (already in the planning stages) will rectify these problems.

But for those of you out there who, like myself, can't afford to shell out big bucks for back issues of EC's, this book is the answer to our dilemma. It's worth owning because even if EC is not the pinnacle of comic book achievement, the stories are still pretty damn good (not on a full stomach, tho'), and remain important milestones

in the total development of the comic book as a creative artistic medium.

=Cross

COMICS, ANATOMY OF A MASS MEDIUM
Reinhold Reitberger and Wolfgang Fuchs.
Little, Brown, and Co., 1972, $6.95.

One of the most popular avocations of the 1970's, it seems, is writing histories of that socially ignored section of junk culture known as the comic book. Books on the subject have proliferated in the last several years, yielding such opuses as The Steranko History of Comics, The Penguin Book of Comics, History of the Comic Strip, Jerry Robinson's The Comics, Comix, and the forthcoming Harvey Kurtzman's History of Comic Art From Argh to Zap. Riding this flood of sudden interest is Comics, Anatomy of a Mass Medium.

This book claims to be different from the others in being not so much a history of comics, per se, but a chronicle of how the evolution of comic books affected the popular culture and that culture them. The book is likely to be frustrating to American readers as it is written by two Germans, and the volume's German frame of reference is somewhat alien to our American perspective.

Ignoring the atrociously pop cover, the volume is artistically quite handsome, featuring many illustrations from all periods of development, with both newspaper strips and comic books figuring prominently. Upon reading, however, one begins to doubt the sincerity of the writers, as the book is literally brimming with an unbelievably high percentage of factual errors. This may or may not be the result of researching with German translations of American comics, but it is inexcusable nonetheless and tends to void any trust the reader may have in the authors' conclusions.

The authors also seem relatively unconcerned with important events in American comics history. They ignore the contributions of such persons as Will Eisner, M.C. Gaines, and Jack Cole, and they almost totally disregard the E.C. Comics group, dispencing with the latter in a mere paragraph. The single exception being Mad, which they briefly dwell upon in the chapter called "Sex and Satire".

The history does give recognition to such persons as the much neglected Dell artist, Alberto Giolitti, who seems to have had quite an effect on European artists, and virtually none on American artists. The authors also dismiss underground comix with the phrase, "Underground comix are polemics in comics format, emotional arguments expressing resentment of the establishment. These radical comix are addressed to a special readership, one that is more responsive to Robert Crumb's Mr. Natural than to figures which symbolize the system like Captain America and Superman. But instead of leading to new objectives and breaking new ground, these radical underground comix exploit the state of mind of a reactionary subculture and shock by their unconsidered portrayal of drug-addicted dropouts." This single statement, more than any other in the book, reveals how distant the authors are from American culture.

The most interesting chapter in the book involves itself with "The European Comics Scene", a subject which is generally ignored in America. Included in this section are many reproductions of European comic art, succinctly illustrating the directions which comics on the continent have taken. It is an interesting chapter, one which helps put American comics in a larger perspective.

One of the last chapters in the book is used to present an argument for comics being art, as if the authors could convince anyone not already put off by their gross errors and execrable generalizations. It is perhaps a good argument, but it begins by assuming that comics are art, and only used comics to prove the point -- an argument which would fail to persuade the skeptic. The final chapter discusses trends in the American comics, such as realism ala GL/GA, and fantasy ala Conan the Barbarian. Hohum.

Outside of its blatant lack of research, the books greatest flaw is its failure to carry out its intended goal. The authors cannot decide whether to write a history of the comics or a sociological study of the field. This mixture of contexts greatly impares the effectiveness of the book. Trying to cram both attitudes into a space that does not provide room enough to properly handle even one of them resulted in sloppiness and confusion. It

is neither a good history nor is it a good examination of the medium in terms of its cultural impact. It is, in short, a bad book.

However, it does point out a new direction for future discussions of the comic form. This will, hopefully, draw attention away from the highly factual, usually boring, and pathetically fannish examinations being made today. If someone who were equal to the task were to compile a study of the cultural aspects of comic books, it might make good reading indeed.

=Grant

TARZAN OF THE APES
Edgar Rice Burroughs (adapted by Robert M. Hodes) and Burne Hogarth.
Introduction by Maurice Horn.
Watson-Guptill, New York, $9.95.

Hogarth has always been the man for Tarzan (get off my back, Frazetta fans!). There was always something a little wimpy about Hal Foster's Tarzan; he always looked a tad anemic, and I always thought the animals he fought smelled of papier-mache and the jungle looked a little like a Culver City back lot. Hogarth was closer to the Burroughs conception of Tarzan: dark-eyed, proud, untamed, yet intelligent. Hogarth's Tarz even resembled Herman Brix, ERB's choice for the movie Ape-man.

Hogarth evidently has some new ideas about the old vine-swinger however, and Watson-Guptill's lavish new book explicates them in hallucinogenic fashion. A real sea change here: introducing the first sexually ambiguous Tarzan!

The book is an almost literal translation of the first part of Burroughs' initial Ape Man tale. All that boring guff about young Lord Greystoke's heroic folks, the mutinous crew of their ship, and the couple's subsequent marooning are dispatched in stolid Fosteresque form. Not much happens until old man Greystoke and spouse get offed and young Tarz is adopted by his simian foster parents.

The informal jungle education of Tarzan proceeds swiftly, but the telling is somewhat different in Hogarth's new conception. We have a new Ape Man...young, true (he can't be more than fifteen or sixteen as concieved here). But my GAWD, the way he's drawn. The broad-shouldered, wild-haired Tarzan of old has been transformed into something resembling a sloe-eyed Max's Kansas City lounge lizard. Sort of a cross between a decadent David Cassidy and an alligator wrestler.

Often Hogarth draws Tarzan's mouth with a pout that can only be called Jaggerish; the eyes are sultry and seductive (and have you ever tried to seduce an ape?); the body at times is almost curvaceous. The posing is outrageous; one particular pose has the Ape Man stretched out on a viney chaise-lounge like some refugee from an Aubrey Beardsley pen-and-ink. The Ape-Man is also nude, but no genitals are evident. Hermaphrodiety, anyone? It's a good thing Jane wasn't around for this installment.

Hogarth's characterizations seem to overbalance the picture of Tarzan to emphasize the grace and mystery of the Jungle King, while deemphasizing the brutishness of his character. As a result, the scenes of great violence do not work. The almost absurdly feminine concept of the Ape Man can't carry off the vision of Tarzan as Man of Action. I write the conception off as either an experiment which failed or a very bizarre head-trip on the part of Hogarth.

Nonetheless, the book has much to recommend itself. It is without a doubt the most spectacular comic publication in recent history. The full color printing is amazing--sharp and bold--and the coloring is wild. A whole spectrum unknown to comics is presented here. Nowhere is this quality more evident than in scenes deep in the jungle foliage. This isn't a Foster jungle of hemp vines and rubber creepers; Hogarth draws and paints his jungles like Joseph von Sternberg lost and tripping in a hothouse filled with triffids. You have to see this stuff to believe it. The book is worth buying for the coloring and the landscapes, even if you don't believe in Hogarth's basic drawing of the Ape Man.

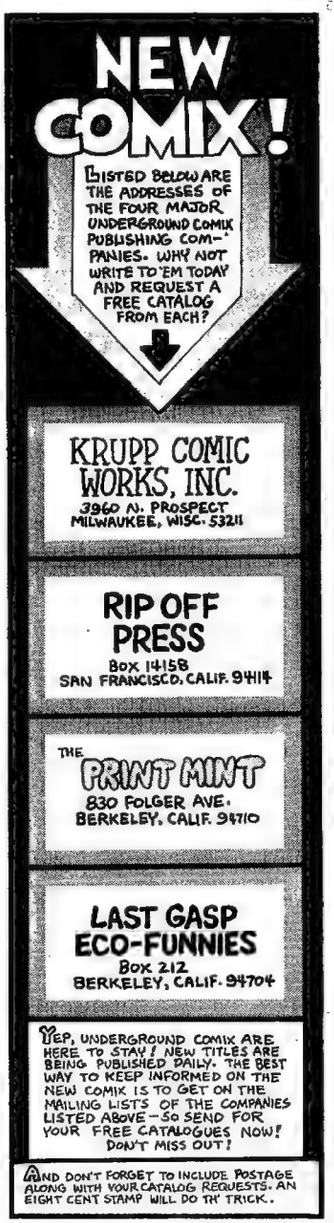
ERB's prose is a little purple at times, and the text-and-picture format invented by Foster is as numbing as ever, but I guess we're stuck with it, and Tarzan looks stupid with word balloons coming out of his mouth anyway.

As for the introduction, Maurice Horn is a competent commentator on newspaper strips, as Frogs go, but when dwelling on Hogarth he tends to become idiotically solumn. Really, Maurice, Rembrandt

Psychosis is a disease of the mind which many comic critics fall prey to, and this stuff is, after all, popular culture. I can do without the slavering. (I'm glad I've never met a scholarly Alex Toth fan; I'd probably kill him...)

The Hogarth Tarzan of the Apes is colorful, silly, strange, provocative, dumb, dazzling, and absolutely essential to those comic addicts with an interest in the extravagent and the perverse.

=Morris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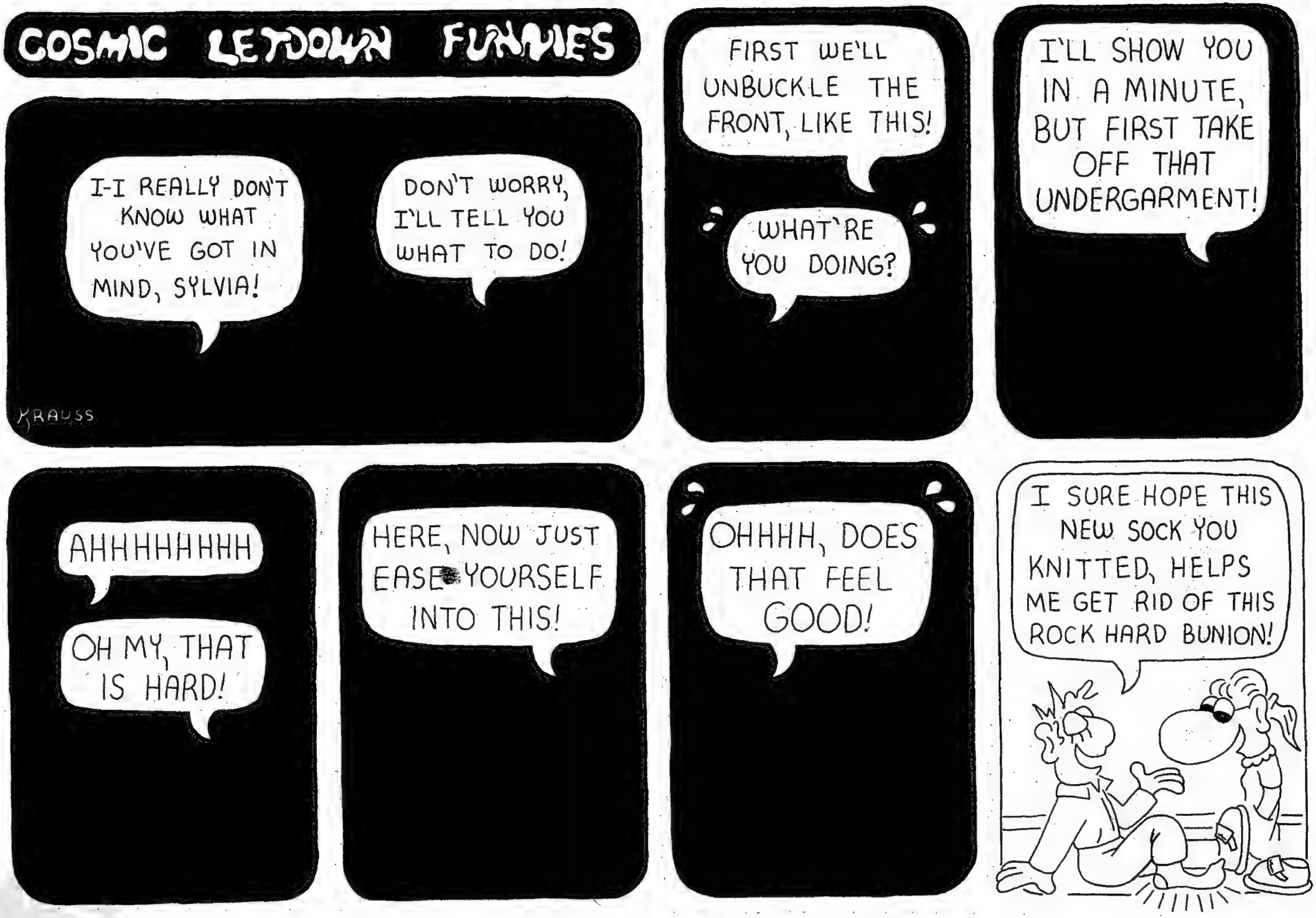
AND DON'T FORGET TO INCLUDE POSTAGE ALONG WITH YOUR CATALOG REQUESTS. AN EIGHT CENT STAMP WILL DO TH' TRICK.

= EC Con cont. from p. 10

back into Madison with some prime EC's tucked into our suitcases, Jack Davis sketches of ourselves scribbled in the program books, empty wallets, a generous helping of pleasant memories and determined to make it to next years 2nd EC Fan Addict Convention, which, according to Bruce Hershenson, con host and organizer, will give primary emphasis to the war and humor books.

=Ayres


COSMIC LETDOWN FUNNIES
I-I REALLY DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'VE GOT IN MIND, SYLVIA!
DON'T WORRY, I'LL TELL YOU WHAT TO DO!
KRAUSS
FIRST WE'LL UNBUCKLE THE FRONT, LIKE THIS!
WHAT'RE YOU DOING?
I'LL SHOW YOU IN A MINUTE, BUT FIRST TAKE OFF THAT UNDERGARMENT!
AHHHHHHHH
OH MY, THAT IS HARD!
HERE, NOW JUST EASE YOURSELF INTO THIS!
OHHHH, DOES THAT FEEL GOOD!
I SURE HOPE THIS NEW SOCK YOU KNITTED, HELPS ME GET RID OF THIS ROCK HARD BUNION!

EDITORIALS

MIND AS BEHOLDS THE EYE

Five years have passed since the underground comix burst upon the world. Five years since Haight-Ashbury, acid trips, and the Grateful Dead were headliner material. Five years since the Summer of Love, and a new world has been ushered in on the ashes of the old.

And, in five years, how much have the underground comix progressed?

Very little!

S. Clay Wilson has virtually dropped out of sight, Bob Crumb has degenerated from a perceptive chronicler of human existence to a tasteless pornographer, much schlock, such as the Geiser comix, has been foisted upon us by non-discriminating publishers. True, several good comix, such as Moondog and Fantagor have appeared, but these seem to be the exception that proves the rule. Such exciting projects as The Gothic Blimp, which featured Wrightson, Kaluta, Metzger, Spain, and others, have seen light and then bitten the dust.

For the most part, the only real progression that the underground comix have made in the last five years has been in an area almost totally alien to the culture which spawned them. The true progress of the underground comix has been financial, and they have set themselves up so strongly that they are actually threatening to subplant the traditional comics, something which would have been unthinkable five years ago.

Now that the underground comix have proven their economic feasibility, many straight comics pros, such as Wally Wood, Al Williamson, Neal Adams, and Frank Brunner are looking into the possibilities of the underground comix. This, along with such factors as the present economic situation, and the various restrictions inherent in the trade, is dealing a slow but sure death blow to the straight comics, while the undergrounds are thriving, and are being printed by at least four established publishers, with many more springing up.

Betraying the potential with which they can change the form and direction of the graphic story, is the tendency of the underground comix to try and do nothing more than reworking themes from years gone by. While they could, and should, be producing stories totally unlike any being done in straight comics today, the artists and writers of the undergrounds seem content to repeat their own stories over and over in a seeming parody of the formulas that curse the straight comics. Outside of the work of George Metzger, Richard Corben, Dan O'Neill, and some of the later work of Larry Welz, there have been no truly new or innovative stories from the underground comix in the past couple years.

1973 may be the climactic year for both the straight comics and the underground comix. On the other hand, it may not be. It will be an interesting year, and well worth watching.

* * *

As I assume you may have gathered by now, Mobius Tripp and Steven Grant are one and the same. Why call myself Mobius Tripp? A number of reasons.

First off, Steven D. Grant sounds like a made-up name. As Jim Steranko once said, "Steven Grant? Nobody's got a name like Steven Grant!" So, for credibility's sake, I called myself Mobius Tripp.

Secondly, I allowed myself to be swayed by numerology, which said something about Mobius Tripp being a perfect number, and guaranteeing success. I didn't really believe it, but I used the name Mobius Tripp anyway.

Lastly, Master Tyme and Mobius Tripp was a series by one of my favorite artists, George Metzger, which appeared in Bill Spicer's Graphic Story Magazine. I just dug the name so I used it.

Anyway, I am no one but Steven Grant now. This is where the confusion really begins.

* * *

Next issue, The Vault of Mindless Fellowship is undergoing a bit of a change. Instead of just dealing with comic books, we're going to be discussing all facets of popular culture: films, rock and roll music, science fiction, and other subjects -- with special emphasis on comic art. Among the articles will be a discussion of the moral aspects of Dead-

man, Chris Morris on Captain Beefheart and Bob Dylan, Bill Cross on horror films, and perhaps an interview with Mike Ploog, the smash artist of Werewolf by Night and The Monster of Frankenstein. Also, other features so surprising that we haven't got the slightest idea what they'll be yet.

* * *

As I mentioned in The Haunt of Fandom #2, Alex Toth will be working on The Shadow. There seems to be a lot of hostility out there towards Toth and his unique approach to comic art. I have heard a lot of complaints about Toth's impressionistic artwork. Even though Alex Toth is one of the most innovative storytellers in comics, because he doesn't draw like Frank Frazetta, he can't be any good, right?

Toth's art is among the most sophisticated work appearing in comic books. His meticulous use of blacks demonstrates a technical acuity far in advance of most comic book artists today. It is a complex and non-flamboyant talent which Toth possesses, and he knows his medium and constantly experiments with it. He does not draw like a Frazetta, because he is not Frazetta, or Adams, or Smith; he is Toth, and he does his work excellently.

Toth works with comic books. Frazetta cannot draw comic books, although he does beautiful spot illustrations and paintings. If you're interested in comic art, you should be paying attention to Toth. If you like Frazetta, and that's all you want to see, you should be buying paperback books.

* * *

By the way, we were sort of wondering what rock everyone was hiding under out there, because, although we've sold lots of copies of V.M.F. #1, we've barely gotten any response. Are you really a mindless fellowship, or are we going to hear from you?

=Grant

Buffalo Chips

This year's Detroit Triple Fan Fair (October 19-22) had some good movies, a lot of fine comics and Jim Steranko, Neal Adams, Jeff Jones, Vaughn Bodé, Russ Heath, Bud Plant, Dale Manesis, Phil Seuling, Jerry Bails, the Star Trek people and representatives from The Vault all milling about in a mish-mash of abbreviated panel discussions and last minute schedules. In otherwords, the dealers room was the place to be. You'd learn a lot more haggling with Steranko over the price of a pulp than you would at the panel discussions.

The highlight of the con was a twenty minute panel discussion concerning SF in comics that ended most abruptly whereupon Neal Adams proceeded to entertain with some very rewarding off the cuff remarks.

We left before the con ended.

**

It has been said of EC comics that their legendary greatness was due not so much to their own creative excellence as it was to the prevalent mediocrity of their contemporaries...something on the order of the proverbial dandelion among the weeds.

As an avid EC fan, I find this metaphor not only an insultingly crass oversimplification but also disturbingly accurate.

EC's were the "best of a bad lot"...however, most everything is crap! The culture is geared to maximum production of crap, and comics definitely take the lead in the great crap production/consumption cycle.

When was the last time consistent quality hit the newstands? When was the last time consistent quality survived on the newstands? I'd be hard pressed to come up with even five titles that maintain a continually high standard of both art and narrative...Conan, Luke Cage, Mr. Miracle...possibly Captain America and The Hulk.

When you picked up an EC you were assured of quality art and stories of not only impact but also import. A single issue could run the gamut artistically, from the fine line boys -- Williamson and Wood -- to the masters of panel continuity and modern composition -- Krigstein and Kurtzman -- with stops in between for the intimacy of a Kamen, the elasticity of a Jack Davis, the superbly Eisnerish and much imitated renderings of a Johnny Craig, or for the careful delicacy of a George Evans or Reed Crandall.

Stir all this up with a generous portion of Ingels, Feldstein, Severin, Orlando and a Ray Bradbury turning out plot lines, sprinkle with a helping of Toth, Frazetta, Heath, Torres, Kubert and Wolverton, and you have a genius soufflé.

How can it be beat?... eighteen issues of Silver

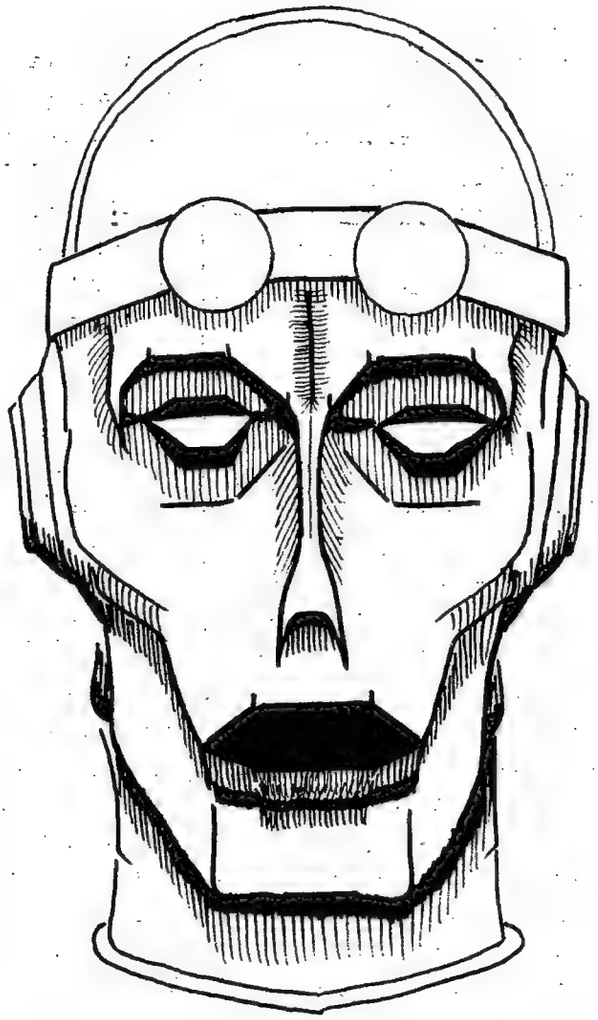
Surfer?...Ditko's Spider-man?...Conan?...Steranko's Nick Fury?...Plastic Man by Cole?...Kirby's Fourth World trilogy?...nineteen Deadman appearances and sixteen GL/GA's by Adams, or the Warren magazines (which lifted three-fourths of EC's artists and storylines initially -- now serving as a springboard for Filipino illustrators whose overly detailed panels bear not the slightest resemblance to any graphic story technique ever pioneered by an Eisner, Kirby, Toth or Kurtzman)? Eisner's Spirit, the only possible contender in both quality and longevity, was a newspaper strip!

Most of the good stuff in the past decade has fitfully trickled in from a variety of sources. During the years 1950-1954 EC produced over 500 issues...every one a gem!

Comics, like rock 'n roll 45's, are maximum impact sensations of generally brief duration. Cheap mass consumption and instant disposability are essential to their success.

The EC Horror Library's alien format is the antithesis of these virtues. Lengthy, expensively non-disposable, and highly respectful of its subject matter, the book succeeds admirably in its entombment of once effective cultural artifacts.

=Ayres



WHAT KIND OF MAN READS THE VAULT OF MINDLESS FELLOWSHIP ?

— Undergrounds cont. from p. 13

ESOTERICA: Greaser Comics (Di Caprio and Jaccoma), Coochy Cooty Men's Comics (Robert Williams), Terminal Comics (Michael McMillan). Greaser is an extraordinarily crude and funny book about New York in the fifties. Coochy Cooty is the penultimate "funny animal" book. Terminal is beezaare and probably for rabid tastes like mine only. Look into 'em.

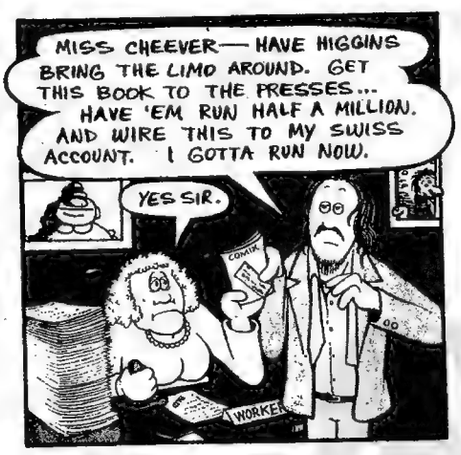
You'll notice that there are very few titles from the last year. The output has been very mediocre, with some of the titles downright insulting. Even Crumb's latest work from excessive anality (though XYZ has its interesting spots). Are comix through? Stay tuned!

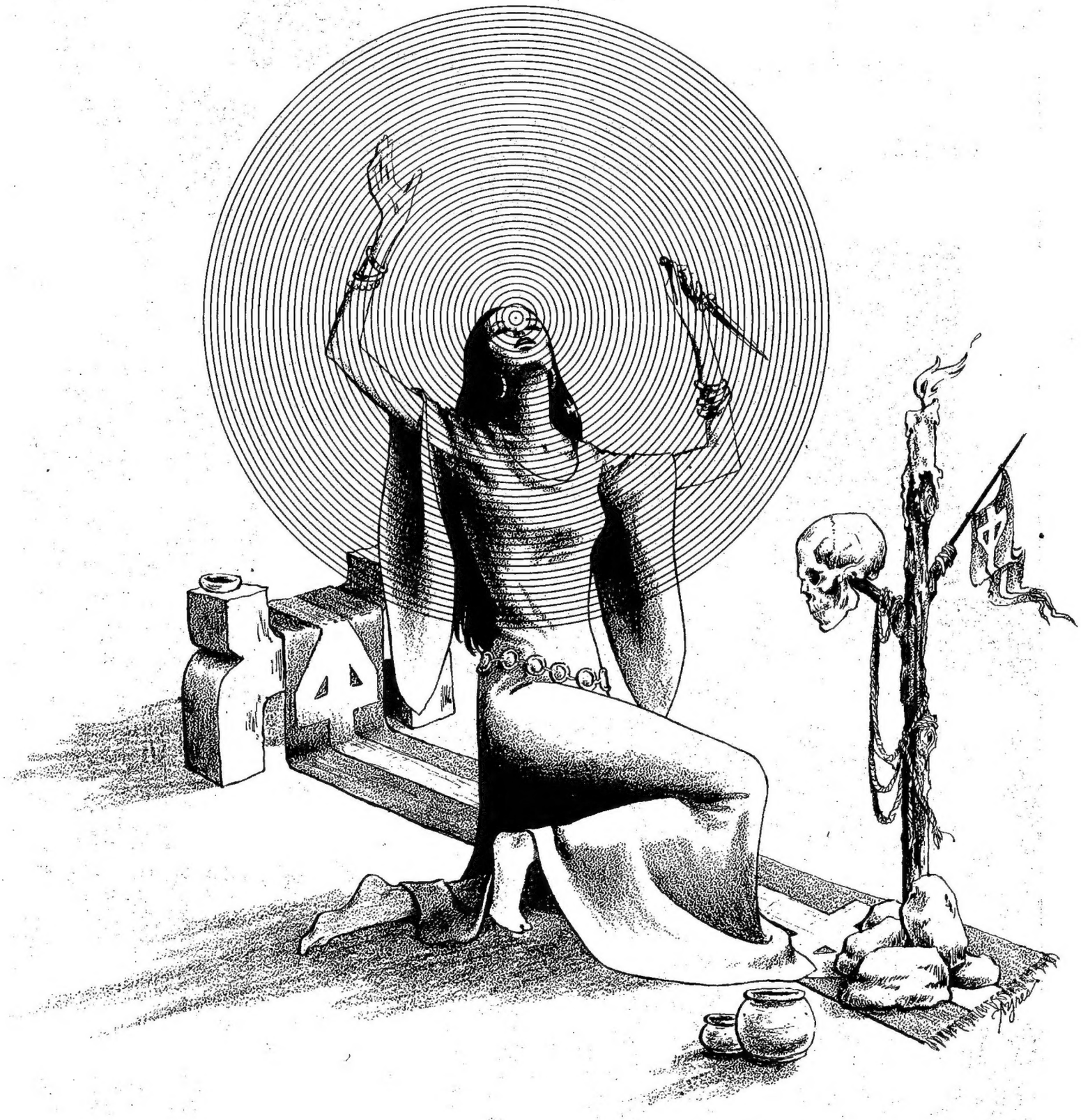
=Morris

— Kitchen Interview cont. from p. 7

let the artists do what they want. I think that the best product comes out when the artist does his own editing.

--END--


MISS CHEEVER— HAVE HIGGINS BRING THE LIMO AROUND. GET THIS BOOK TO THE PRESSES... HAVE 'EM RUN HALF A MILLION. AND WIRE THIS TO MY SWISS ACCOUNT. I GOTTA RUN NOW.
YES SIR.
COMIX
WORKER



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The Menomonee Falls Gazette

COMIX

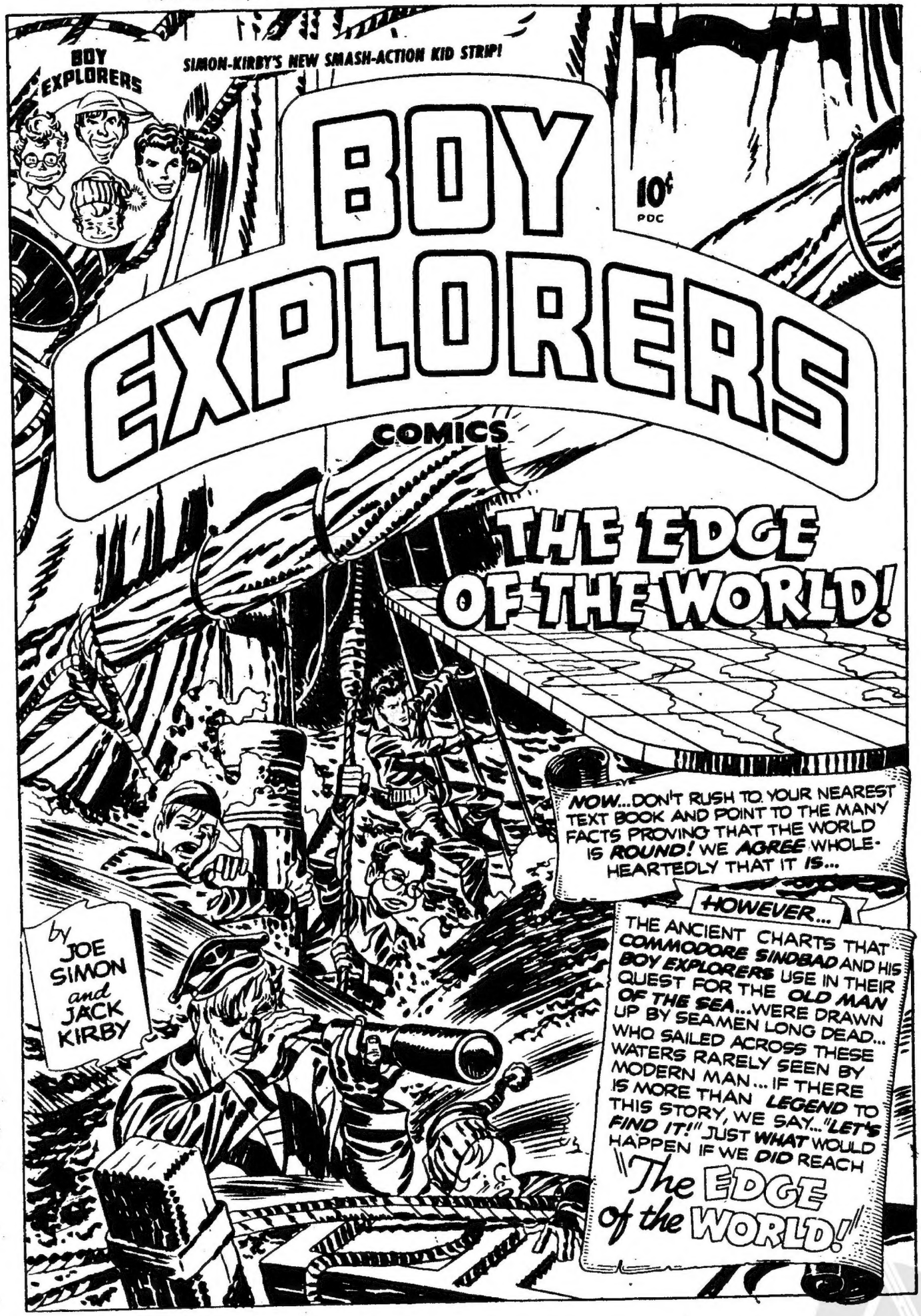
COMICS

NOSTALGIA

MOTION PICTURES

664 STATE

PUBLISHER'S NOTE: For the present emergency, newsstand sales will be temporarily discontinued and subscribers alone will receive copies of these issues. Hope you like them.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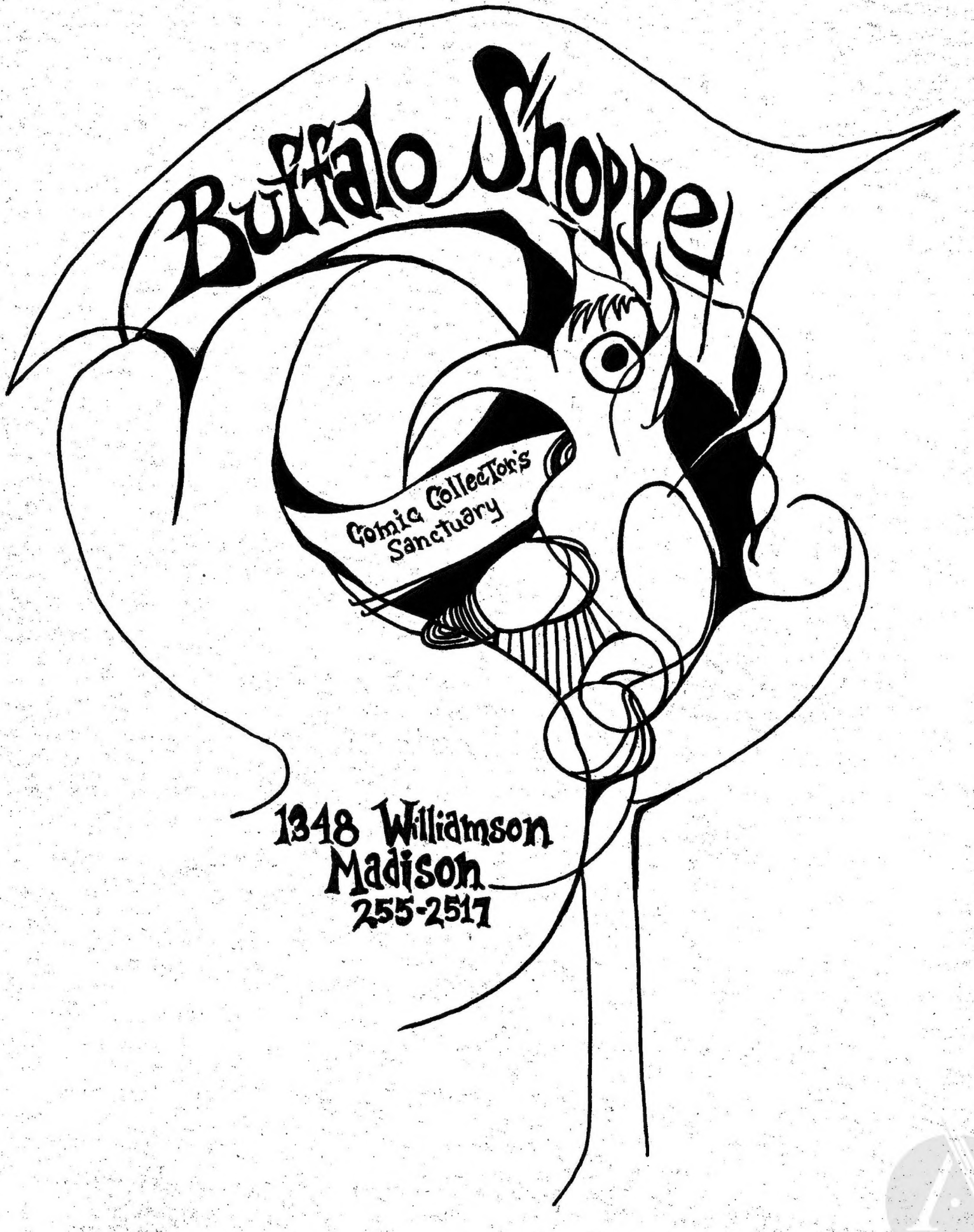
HOWEVER...
THE ANCIENT CHARTS THAT COMMODORE SINDBAD AND HIS BOY EXPLORERS USE IN THEIR QUEST FOR THE OLD MAN OF THE SEA...WERE DRAWN UP BY SEAMEN LONG DEAD... WHO SAILED ACROSS THESE WATERS RARELY SEEN BY MODERN MAN... IF THERE IS MORE THAN LEGEND TO THIS STORY, WE SAY..."LET'S FIND IT!" JUST WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF WE DID REACH
"The EDGE of the WORLD!"
by JOE SIMON and JACK KIRBY

BOY EXPLORERS COMICS, September-October, 1946, Volume 1, No. 2,

LOST COMICS OF THE '40's #1 in a series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